



International
Labour
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GLOBAL BUSINESS
AND DISABILITY
NETWORK

► Disability inclusion in the African business community: latest trends and good practices

Contents

	Page
▶ Executive Summary	5
▶ Overview of trends on disability inclusion in the African business community	7
▶ Good corporate disability inclusion practices in Africa	9
▶ National Business and Disability Networks in Africa	11
Status of African NBDNs	11
Good governance practices	11
Activities	12
▶ INGOs – disability confidence builders of businesses in Africa and supporters of African NBDNs	14
Building disability confidence of the business community in Africa	14
Supporting existing NBDNs and establishing new ones	15
▶ Conclusion and recommendations	16
Private sector companies	16
National Business and Disability Networks	16
Governments	17
Employer and Business Membership Organizations	17
▶ Acknowledgements	18
▶ Annex – Knowledge products and tools of African NBDNs and their respective members	19

► Executive Summary

In October 2022, the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) organized two online events on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the African labour markets.

The first event, a technical workshop on “Strengthening National Business and Disability Networks and Supporting Initiatives in Africa” held on 5 October 2022, gathered representatives of existing National Business and Disabilities and Networks (NBDNs) and representatives of initiatives that could lead to the establishment of new NBDNs in Africa. The technical workshop was an opportunity for the exchange of experiences and good practices between entities coordinating NBDNs in Africa and inspiring organizations willing to set up new NBDNs. Solutions to overcome challenges faced by NBDNs were also discussed to strengthen their capacities and foster dialogue between these employer-led country level platforms on disability issues.

Following this technical workshop, the ILO GBDN held a public regional conference on “Business opportunities in Africa: Inclusion of talent with disabilities” on 26 October 2022. The regional conference brought together Multinational Enterprises and smaller companies, Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs), African NBDNs, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) on disability and international and African organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) as well as anyone else interested in disability inclusion in the private, for-profit sector. Topics discussed included good corporate disability inclusion practices, the status and activities of African NBDNs, vocational skills training for persons with disabilities and partnerships between businesses and non-business actors on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The regional conference closed with a multi-stakeholder discussion, also including government and workers’ organisations representatives.

The key insights and practices presented during these two ILO GBDN Africa events are consolidated in this report, thus aiming to provide an overview of key initiatives on disability inclusion in private sector companies in Africa. Key takeaways from preliminary discussions held with ILO GBDN Multinational Enterprise members operating in Africa, regionally and nationally operating as well as local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), EBMOs, INGOs and OPDs in preparation of the two events are also included.

The methodology used to conduct these online discussions is semi-structured interviews¹ based on a list of predetermined questions to frame the conversation around specific topics. Semi-structured interviews allowed for more flexibility during the discussions while following a pre-established road map for the collection of qualitative data.

The objective of this report is to present current trends in disability inclusion in the African business community by highlighting good corporate practices and initiatives. The report presents how private sector companies are using their leverage to contribute to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their workforces and at the same time improve their employability. An overview of the status and activities of African NBDNs is also included as well as a presentation of the key stakeholders involved in the establishment and functioning of these employer-led country level platforms on disability issues. Further, the role of INGOs in building disability confidence in the business community is addressed.

The report concludes with three key recommendations per actor as follows:

¹ Interviews were conducted from July 2022 to September 2022.

Private sector companies

- Adopt and implement a company-wide disability inclusion policy, supported by senior management, including on issues of accessibility, reasonable accommodation, awareness raising
- Join existing African NBDNs and contribute to the development of new ones in Africa
- Partner with INGOs and OPDs to get support in their disability inclusion journey and build their disability confidence

National Business and Disability Networks

- Develop a business model to ensure the long-term sustainability of the network, in particular financial sustainability and the provision of added-value services to company members
- Develop advocacy capacities to engage with governments on disability inclusion at the national level and contribute to policy and legal developments for an accessible and inclusive labour market
- Initiate and maintain dialogue between NBDNs allowing for exchange of experience and good practices, ultimately inspiring each other

Governments

- Adopt policies and legislation to improve the employment of persons with disabilities and encourage private sector companies to recruit persons with disabilities
- Lead by example in terms of employing persons with disabilities and promote their career progression
- Develop awareness-raising campaigns on disability to tackle stigma and misconceptions

Employer and Business Membership Organizations

- Contribute to the establishment of new NBDNs in the region and encourage EBMO members to join NBDNs
- Lead by example by taking action within their organization to recruit persons with disabilities and train staff on disability issues and encourage their members to do so
- Organize events related to disability inclusion to raise awareness and trigger interest and commitment on this topic among their members

► Overview of trends on disability inclusion in the African business community

It is estimated that there are more than 80 million persons with disabilities living in Africa². Most of them have limited access to inclusive education and fewer opportunities to develop vocational skills, hence putting them in a disadvantageous position to enter the labour market. Discrimination, stigma and misconceptions about disability add to these barriers to accessing employment opportunities. Against this backdrop, private sector companies in Africa have a crucial role to play and can use their leverage to acknowledge the potential of this untapped talent pool and contribute to their inclusion and economic empowerment by building a more inclusive labour market.

It is important to recall that disability inclusion in the private sector should be approached from a business perspective and this is the angle adopted by most of the companies interviewed and that intervened during the ILO GBDN regional conference. For companies with a diversity, equity and inclusion policy in place, disability inclusion should be part of that policy and not be addressed as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Human Resources (HR) issue only. The inclusion of persons with disabilities encompasses the organization as a whole and should start from the top management. A commitment to disability inclusion from the leadership is critical and will trickle down to all employees, giving a strong signal and impetus for building an inclusive corporate culture.

Inclusion also involves accessible facilities and recruitment processes and an enabling work environment where assistive technologies and reasonable accommodation are provided. Disability inclusion should be an integral part of business strategies. Companies engaged in disability inclusion acknowledge that there is a business case for inclusive employment. It is a win-win for both businesses and persons with disabilities as well as society at large. Including persons with disabilities means accessing an overlooked pool of talent, increased innovation, engagement and retention, enhanced reputation, and benefits everyone in the company³.

There are business benefits for disability-inclusive employers, including improved productivity, inclusion of different perspectives, ideas. According to a study from ILO GBDN company member Accenture, companies championing disability inclusion “were twice as likely as others to have higher total shareholder return than those of their peer group”⁴.

Discussions held with companies, EBMOs and INGOs were the opportunity to take stock of the initiatives taken by employers to tackle barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities and draw a current state of play of disability inclusion in the private sector in Africa.

There is a positive dynamic from the business community in fostering disability-inclusive employment in Africa. A growing number of multinational enterprises (MNEs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are implementing inclusive initiatives to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their workforces and advance their careers. While some of ILO GBDN company members have already developed innovative disability-inclusive practices in Africa, others are still in the early stages of their disability inclusion journey in the region but are committed to moving forward in this area. These companies welcomed the organisation of the ILO GBDN regional conference as an opportunity for learning from companies with relevant experience in the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The regional conference gave a space for highlighting the proactive attitude of companies acknowledging the barriers faced by persons with disabilities when trying to access the labour market and taking action to help them

² Africa Renewal, Finbarr Toesland, A double challenge for the disabled, December 2018 – March 2019, Available at: <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2018-march-2019/double-challenge-disabled>

³ ILO, The win-win of disability inclusion, InfoStories, December 2016, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/The-win-win-of-disability-inclusion#the-win-win-of-disability-inclusion>

⁴ Accenture, Getting to Equal : The Disability Inclusion Advantage, 2018, p. 7, available at: https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/pdf-89/accenture-disability-inclusion-research-report.pdf

overcome such barriers. As an example, companies are closing the skills gap among persons with disabilities by offering vocational training programmes. These training programmes allow persons with disabilities to acquire skillsets in high-demand areas, including IT and digital marketing and receive qualifications equipping them with the tools to access the competitive labour market. In addition, companies are developing dedicated internship programmes for persons with disabilities as an initial step to enable them to gain relevant skills and professional experience, thereby enhancing their employability. It is also an opportunity for companies to attract and retain talents with disabilities.

It is worth noting that most of these programmes are intended for young persons with disabilities to foster their employment and develop a young talent pool. This focus on the youth is particularly relevant in Africa since this world region has the youngest population globally with more than 400 million people aged between 15 to 35 years⁵. Companies have understood the importance of skilling and recruiting young persons with disabilities who are facing greater barriers to employment. Through internships, training and mentoring programmes, companies such as Accenture, Atos, L'Oréal, and Uganda Breweries Limited, among others, contribute to building persons with disabilities' self-confidence and enhancing their employment readiness to enter the world of work.

Private sector companies are also working towards removing stigma and misconceptions about disability by educating and raising awareness about this topic among their workforce. They do so by training their employees, including managers, on disability inclusion to build an open-minded and inclusive corporate culture and environment where persons with disabilities are welcomed, respected and valued. Companies are also ensuring that the workplace is accessible and enabling by providing assistive technologies and reasonable accommodation.

As part of their disability inclusion journey, several companies operating in Africa are developing partnerships with different stakeholders including local and international NGOs, OPDs and international development agencies such as the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The ILO GBDN regional conference gave an overview of such partnerships on ways to recruit and train persons with disabilities and develop their skillset and raise awareness about disability among employees and managers. Partnerships between different stakeholders have proven to be a real driver for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the world of work.

In Africa as well as in other regions, like-minded companies are increasingly coming together through NBDNs to have peer-to-peer discussions on disability inclusion, ways to develop their confidence on this topic and improve employment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. As disability inclusion hubs for committed employers, NBDNs are employer-led platforms where company members can take their disability inclusion journey to the next level.

Disability inclusion in the private sector also involves the participation of non-business actors. During the regional conference, representatives of governments, trade unions and OPDs were invited to discuss opportunities for the promotion of an enabling environment for the employment of persons with disabilities in the private, for-profit sector in Africa. They acknowledged the difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities in accessing the labour market. The importance of improved access to inclusive education, vocational training for persons with disabilities and the adoption and implementation of policies on their employment were emphasized. The role of civil society and OPDs have been highlighted as they advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the world of work.

The African business community is increasingly taking concrete initiatives to foster the employment and employability of persons with disabilities. The next chapter includes an overview of such initiatives and practices.

⁵ African Union, Youth Development, available at: <https://au.int/en/youth-development>

► Good corporate disability inclusion practices in Africa

Several MNEs and SMEs are committed to including persons with disabilities in the world of work. This commitment translates into an array of concrete initiatives to improve the recruitment of persons with disabilities and build an accessible and enabling work environment allowing them to thrive and develop professionally.

Some companies have partnered with international or local NGOs and OPDs to assist them in the process. For instance, in Kenya, Standard Chartered partners with OPDs to identify and recruit young graduates with disabilities and create a database to be consulted when a job opportunity arises within the organization. The company also creates an inclusive and accessible work environment providing employees with disabilities with reasonable accommodation including assistive technologies, screen readers and flexible working hours. Through the Futuremakers initiative, Standard Chartered employees volunteer to coach and mentor young persons with or without disabilities to improve their employability in the labour market.

Both Unilever and Safaricom have set a recruitment target of 5% of persons with disabilities represented in their workforce by 2025. To reach this target, Unilever is partnering with Sightsavers to receive technical support, undergo a site disability audit and build the capacity of line managers and the entire organisation.

Uganda Breweries Limited implemented work programmes offering entry-level roles and internships for young graduates with disabilities. In partnership with the INGO Light for the World, Uganda Breweries Limited will launch a mentoring programme to improve young graduates with disabilities' self-confidence and employability. The company also completed a disability-readiness checklist as a member of the Uganda Business and Disability Network, to evaluate its readiness to hire and accommodate job candidates and workers with disabilities. These initiatives are in line with their commitment to the "Make 12.4% Work" initiative.

Signs Media is a Kenyan company operating on a social enterprise model and contributing to the economic, social, political and talent development of people with disabilities. The company has adopted an inclusive strategic plan providing for a target of 60% of persons with disabilities in the workforce. This target is a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for human resources. Through its product Signs TV, Signs Media contributes to giving more public exposure to persons with disabilities since 80% of the programmes broadcasted are hosted by persons with disabilities. The company also ensures the application process is inclusive for persons with disabilities. For example, for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people, the company created AssistallApp, a mobile application for sign language interpretation services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This application contributes to bridging the communication gap between Deaf people and recruiting employers by providing access to a sign language interpreter.

Besides recruiting persons with disabilities, some companies provide vocational training for persons with disabilities, in particular young persons, to enhance their employability and equip them with relevant skills to improve their access to the labour market. Aware of the recurrent exclusion of persons with disabilities from formal education in Africa as well as in other regions, Atos Senegal partnered with 01Talent Africa to launch Zone01, a tech lab to train young talents on digital skills. Atos is adapting this mainstream training to make it inclusive and accessible to young persons with disabilities by improving the accessibility of its facilities in Dakar, where the tech lab is hosted. This programme does not require academic qualification and aims to train 25,000 young talents within 10 years, creating a talent pool representative of the diversity of society. Atos is also engaged in improving access to education for persons with disabilities in Africa in partnership with GIZ.

In South Africa, Accenture and L'Oréal have taken the initiative to equip young persons with disabilities with relevant skillsets to get them job-ready. Accenture launched a disability cadet programme to train young persons with disabilities on project management and information and communications technology (ICT) and create career opportunities for them. The current cohort has 24 cadets who, after completion of the two-year programme, will obtain a national diploma in ICT. Through this programme, Accenture is able to equip persons with disabilities with the skills required to work with them or in other companies of the ICT sector. As for L'Oréal, the company started their Digital marketing academy in March 2022 - a pilot internship programme for young persons with

disabilities to develop digital marketing skills. For this initiative, L'Oréal partnered with a recruitment agency to identify candidates and place graduates with disabilities in digital marketing roles.

In Kenya, the telecommunications company Safaricom has also trained persons with disabilities in digital skills. In partnership with Sightsavers, the company is driving a talent pipeline of persons with disabilities and has onboarded 52 persons with disabilities with digital skills through internships. With these initiatives, L'Oréal, Accenture and Safaricom provide the opportunity for young persons with disabilities to get qualifications for highly in-demand vocational skills and also attract and retain these young talents in their workforces.

Through a partnership with a local NGO, TotalEnergies Mauritania trains blind people to enhance their access to employment. After the completion of the training, TotalEnergies hired one of the trainees as a receptionist. The company provided assistive technologies the employee needed to perform her tasks and then trained her to develop professionally to take on a new role as an internal communication manager.

As a key component of disability inclusion in the workplace, companies are also building inclusive corporate cultures and accessible work environments to accommodate and allow persons with disabilities to thrive. Training employees on disability and inclusion contributes to combating stigma and deconstructing misconceptions about disabilities. It is also a way to engage employees in the company's disability inclusion journey and create an open-minded and inclusive workforce that respects, values and enables colleagues with disabilities to flourish professionally.

Many companies⁶ provide awareness-raising training to their employees and inclusion training for managers. These training educate and sensitize companies' workforce on disability and build their disability confidence.

In this effort of building an inclusive environment, Standard Chartered Kenya and Uganda Breweries Limited are taking an additional step by planning to train their employees in sign language to communicate with customers and colleagues with hearing impairments. Other noteworthy initiatives by these companies include Uganda Breweries Limited's willingness to expand their disability inclusion across their value chain and Standard Chartered Kenya involving their Executive committee in Diversity and Inclusion consultations. They have also established an Employee Resource Group, which is an employee-led diversity and inclusion initiative within Standard Chartered Kenya. At Signs Media, disability inclusion is embedded in the company's policies, and employees are required to sign a disability mainstreaming article pledging their commitment to respecting persons with disabilities and helping them reach their full potential.

Through several initiatives and practices, the business community in Africa is taking concrete and relevant action to address the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the region. Additionally, a growing number of companies are joining NBDNs to improve their inclusive practices and benefit from the exchange of experiences in the field of disability inclusion with companies that share the same values.

⁶ Examples include Accenture South Africa, AccorHotels Côte d'Ivoire, Atos Senegal, BNP Paribas Morocco and Algeria, L'Oréal South Africa and Egypt, Standard Chartered Kenya, Uganda Breweries Limited and Unilever.

► National Business and Disability Networks in Africa

Status of African NBDNs

As in other regions of the world, several NBDNs have been developing in Africa in recent years. There are currently five NBDNs in Africa, namely Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. Except for the South African Business and Disability Network known as the South African Employers for Disability (SAE4D), NBDNs in Africa are fairly new and were established as of 2019, the most recent one being the one in Ethiopia, which was re-launched August 2022.

For the first time, in 2022, the ILO GBDN organized a technical workshop for the coordinating entities of NBDNs in Africa and organizations willing to set up such networks in the region. The online event was attended by more than 30 representatives of business and employer organizations as well as INGOs. The workshop provided an opportunity for discussions between entities and organizations contributing to the establishment and running of NBDNs to present their respective national networks. They were able to exchange experiences and good practices and discuss solutions to the challenges they face in order to strengthen their capacity. The exchanges also inspired organizations that are considering setting up new NBDNs. Finally, the workshop was an opportunity to create relationships and encourage dialogue between NBDNs beyond the events organized by the ILO GBDN.

Discussions with coordinating entities of African NBDNs and the technical workshop provided insights on existing NBDNs in Africa and an opportunity to learn about initiatives that could lead to the establishment of new networks in the region. These national networks are at different stages of maturity, some being well-established with a solid and sustainable structure while others are still developing or even at the risk of failing. However, beyond their respective status, the NBDNs are driven by a common willingness to provide platforms for the development of an inclusive corporate culture that respects people with disabilities and promotes their recruitment and career progression.

Good governance practices

Regarding the structure and governance of NBDNs in Africa, they are mostly coordinated and managed by EBMOs and include a steering committee comprised of representatives of company members to guide the activities and services of the respective NBDN.

Through discussions with the coordinators of NBDNs as well as INGOs that support them, it is obvious that a clear definition of the roles of each of the actors involved contributes to the success of the NBDN. NBDNs are platforms by and for employers that bring them together around their commitment to disability inclusion in the workplace. These platforms can also include other stakeholders, including from the disability rights sector, such as INGOs and OPDs. Each of these stakeholders has an essential but distinct role to play in an NBDN.

In this sense, EBMOs are often the coordinating and hosting entities of NBDNs. This is the case for the national networks in Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. These organizations represent the business community's commitment to the inclusion and employment of persons with disabilities and provide the impetus to encourage businesses to be more inclusive. They contribute to the setting up and running of NBDNs, sometimes with the support of INGOs such as Light for the World and Sightsavers. These INGOs as well as OPDs should remain associate members and/or partners bringing their expertise in disability inclusion and participating in the capacity building of company members and persons with disabilities. Therefore, the management of the NBDN has to remain in the hands of the companies.

The Nigerian Business and Disability Network, which is coordinated by the Chartered Institute of Personal Management⁷, differs from other NBDNs since in addition to a steering committee, it has set up task force

⁷ The Chartered Institute of Personal Management is a professional body for HR management.

committees for advocacy, communication, programme management, finance and sustainability, and monitoring. These committees are chaired by members of the steering committee. The network has also defined its membership to comprise companies with a share of 70% and the remaining 30% to include non-business entities, e.g. OPDs, development partners and INGOs. By establishing a clearly defined, transparent and participatory governance structure and a network led by businesses, the Nigerian NBDN has succeeded in establishing a sustainable platform with a growing membership that sets an example for other NBDNs in Africa and beyond. Like other NBDNs, the one in Nigeria is guided by the ten principles of the ILO GBDN Charter and its operations are based on its own terms of reference.

Activities

NBDNs offer different types of services and products to their members enabling them to support their efforts to be more inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities. As such, company members of NBDNs have access to a range of services⁸ including:

- Training on disability and inclusion to gain disability confidence, develop or improve inclusive practices and initiatives;
- Audits assessing the accessibility of the workplace;
- Self-assessment tools or checklists to identify areas for improvement in the inclusive policies and practices;
- Access to events, including forums and webinars on different disability-related topics;
- Access to job seekers with disabilities⁹.

These services are mostly offered free of charge in partnership with INGOs or OPDs which provide their expertise and assist company members in setting up and/or improving their initiatives on disability inclusion. In this sense, the Uganda NBDN has developed partnerships with several organizations such as Light for the World, ADD International and the National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda to provide training on disability, accessibility audits and assist members in the implementation of their disability inclusion action plan.

Discussions with entities coordinating NBDNs allowed to identify common challenges faced by these platforms. These challenges include financial sustainability, governance structure and growing their membership and services. During the technical workshop, ideas and potential solutions to address these challenges were raised in order to make African NBDNs more effective and sustainable and increase services to their members. Regarding financial sustainability, some NBDNs are considering the establishment of membership fees to ensure the day-to-day functioning of the network, improve and strengthen the services and products offered and ensure the sustainability of the network. Regarding effective governance, a well-defined structure with a clear definition of roles is essential for the management of an NBDN and its sustainability. Finally, concerning membership growth, different solutions were discussed during the technical workshop, including networking, and targeted events on organization and participation.

Furthermore, at the ILO GBDN regional conference, companies such as Standard Chartered, Uganda Breweries Limited and Safaricom which are members of NBDNs in Africa urged other companies to join the NBDNs in countries where they exist. These company members shared their experiences on disability inclusion and emphasized the value of joining NBDNs. NBDNs bring together organizations with a shared interest and commitment to disability inclusion, allowing them to benefit from each other's experiences and advance the social inclusion and employment of persons with disabilities. Members encourage and challenge each other to achieve a higher level of disability inclusion and contribute to the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities by ensuring better access to the labour market.

⁸ This list is non-exhaustive and the services offered may differ from one NBDN to another.

⁹ For instance, the Ethiopian Business and Disability Network which collaborates with an employment agency to establish a database of jobseekers with disabilities accessible to company members.

Emerging initiatives for new NBDNs

The number of NBDNs in Africa is expected to further increase.

In Zambia, a NBDN is currently re-launching. A group of stakeholders including representatives of the ILO office in Zambia, Sightsavers Zambia and the Zambia Federation of Employers convened a meeting to discuss opportunities to re-establish the NBDN and prepare the terms of reference.

In Senegal, as part of its Employment and Disability project, Humanity & Inclusion has initiated a process to set up an NBDN hosted by a national tripartite institution, the High Council for Social Dialogue. Humanity & Inclusion is also exploring opportunities to contribute to the establishment of an NBDN in Tunisia.

Additionally, during the technical workshop for African NBDNs, the Responsible and Citizen Enterprises Commission of the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises expressed its interest in setting up a NBDN in Morocco.

Sightsavers and Light for the World through their respective programmes on economic empowerment and inclusive employment have already contributed to the establishment of NBDNs in Africa, including in Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. These INGOs are planning to continue their activities and contribute to the development of new NBDNs in several African countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Tanzania.

► INGOs – disability confidence builders of businesses in Africa and supporters of African NBDNs

In Africa, as well as in other world regions, companies are willing to be more inclusive and reflect the diversity of society in their workforce. However, many companies do not know how to translate this willingness into concrete initiatives and start their disability inclusion journey. INGOs such as Sightsavers, Light for the World and Humanity & Inclusion may step in and provide support. These INGOs can share their experience and expertise in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the world of work with companies and other stakeholders and guide them in setting up action plans and implementing initiatives to recruit people with disabilities and ensuring the accessibility of the workplace.

Building disability confidence of the business community in Africa

Considering the labour market as a system with gaps, including the lack of disability confidence within employers and the lack of self-confidence and employment readiness of persons with disabilities, Sightsavers works within this system to build the capacity of both employers and persons with disabilities. In recent years, through the UK government-funded initiative “Inclusion Works”, Sightsavers worked on how the labour market can adapt to persons with disabilities. From the first labour market assessments undertaken, Sightsavers noted many companies want to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities but do not necessarily know how to do it best. Thus, the INGO supports companies in their disability inclusion journey by trying to understand their needs, delivering training to equip them with the skills on this topic and conducting audits. Sightsavers also supports the identification of relevant job seekers with disabilities and helps them build self-confidence and get them job-ready.

Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, Light for the World developed partnerships with private sector companies with a strong focus on building their disability confidence. In 2018, Light for the World launched the Make 12,4% Work initiative in Uganda to encourage companies, government and civil society organizations to hire persons with disabilities, ultimately contributing to the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. 12,4% represents the percentage of persons with disabilities living in Uganda, according to available statistics. This initiative started with a group of young people with disabilities who noted the major reason preventing them from finding a job was the lack of disability confidence by employers. These young people became the ambassadors of this initiative which aims to create disability inclusion momentum in the private and public sector and the civil society. Young persons are thus trained and mentored to become disability inclusion facilitators who train companies and organizations on how to become more disability-inclusive. Training is an opportunity for disability inclusion facilitators to advocate for themselves, show their abilities and train managers and employees of companies that signed up to this initiative to change their mindset on disability. Companies are trained on disability awareness and inclusion and become ambassadors of disability inclusion by signing a proof of commitment or the charter of the Uganda Business and Disability Network. Under this initiative, more than 1,400 employees of the private sector have been trained on disability inclusion, 67 private sector actors signed up as members of the initiative, and more than 7,000 young people with disabilities have been involved.

Light for the World Uganda keeps partnering with different NGOs and OPDs, including Sightsavers, ADD International and the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda, to encourage companies to recruit persons with disabilities in their workplace. Light for the World also partnered with the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE) and the Uganda NBDN to support companies in including persons with disabilities and building their capacity to address stereotypes about persons with disabilities in the business community. They also organize career fairs where they meet with private sector companies and explain the opportunities of recruiting persons with disabilities.

Humanity & Inclusion also works to build companies' capacity, support them in their inclusion process and make employment more accessible to persons with disabilities. Humanity & Inclusion contributes to improving the

employment of persons with disabilities in ten African countries. They work with both MNEs' subsidiaries in Africa and local companies and provide support on inclusion, accessibility, audits and awareness raising among others. Humanity & Inclusion is implementing a regional project on Employment and Disability to foster structural change by creating a multi-sectoral structure bringing together relevant stakeholders including local authorities, companies, social actors and employer organisations, to ensure support in all stages of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the world of work. The first stage of the project consisted in supporting companies in being more inclusive, while the second and current stage aims to improve access to employment for persons with disabilities and enhance their skills. They raise awareness about disability and non-discrimination in many companies.

INGOs also develop tools and resources to support employers in building their disability confidence and evaluating their ability to accommodate persons with disabilities in their workspace. For instance, as part of the initiative "Inclusive Futures"¹⁰, Sightsavers contributed to the development of a "Disability-confident employers' toolkit"¹¹, which provides a roadmap for employers to support them in developing an inclusive workplace. This toolkit is used by NBDNs in Kenya and Nigeria among others. Light for the World and ADD International developed a disability readiness checklist which is used by the Uganda NBDN to evaluate company members' readiness to recruit and welcome persons with disabilities. This checklist has been developed based on a previous version of the current ILO GBDN Self-Assessment Tool and adapted to fit the requirement of the business community in Uganda. The checklist allows for benchmarking disability inclusion and priority setting on disability inclusion among private sector. Humanity & Inclusion also developed an Inclusive Employer Toolbox to guide companies that are starting their disability inclusion journey and are willing to hire persons with disabilities. The toolbox includes advice on how to get started on disability inclusion and good practices from inclusive employers.

The ILO GBDN non-business members Sightsavers, Light for the World and Humanity & Inclusion thus play an important role in building disability confidence in the African business community by providing expertise, technical assistance and accompanying them throughout their disability inclusion journey. This role has been acknowledged during both ILO GBDN Africa events. Companies, including Uganda Breweries Limited, Safaricom and Unilever, mentioned their partnerships with INGOs to support their inclusion journey. EBMOs and NBDNs recognized and thanked Sightsavers and Light for the World for their support, assisting in the establishment and the running of some NBDNs or the support provided to company members.

Supporting existing NBDNs and establishing new ones

Sightsavers and Light for the World have been acting as initial conveners and have provided guidance to NBDNs' company members. These INGOs convened relevant stakeholders and provided resources to establish some African NBDNs. For example, Sightsavers contributed to the setting up of NBDNs in Nigeria and Kenya and provided support with secretariat functions to the latter. As for Light for the World, they assisted with the establishment of the NBDN in Uganda and provided technical support.

While providing support with the establishment of some of the African NBDNs, both INGOs acknowledge and respect the structure of NBDNs as employer-led platforms. Sightsavers and Light for the World assist with coordinating entities in the initial stages to establish NBDNs but step back once the network is consolidated to let coordinating entities, mostly EBMOs, take the lead.

Additionally, these INGOs, share their expertise in disability inclusion with NBDNs' company members and provide technical assistance, including in terms of developing disability action plans, providing training and building companies' disability confidence. Through their support, Light for the World and Sightsavers contribute to strengthening the capacities of existing NBDNs in Africa.

¹⁰ Inclusive Futures is an initiative gathering experts and global leaders in disability and development from 23 international organizations. They partner with disabled people's organizations to improve disability inclusion in different areas including education, health care and work.

¹¹ The toolkit and other guidance material are listed in the annex to this report

▶ Conclusion and recommendations

Disability inclusion is gaining momentum in the African business community. Discussions with private sector companies, EBMOs and INGOs as well as the ILO GBDN Africa events of October 2022 showed the growing commitment of companies to the inclusion of people with disabilities in their workforces.

MNEs, regionally and nationally operating companies as well as SMEs are engaging and contributing to building a more inclusive labour market by improving the employment opportunities and employability of persons with disabilities. Companies are implementing different, yet complementary initiatives and practices in the workplace to recruit and accommodate persons with disabilities. They are oftentimes taking the lead in overcoming barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities and tackling stigma and misconceptions about people with disabilities within the company and beyond.

As disability inclusion in the private sector is a learning process, NBDNs provide a space for companies to join their peers that share the same values and commitment on disability inclusion to exchange on this topic and benefit from the expertise of actors from the disability sector. By joining NBDNs and through partnerships with INGOs and OPDs, companies are building their disability confidence.

Disability inclusion is a matter of willingness and commitment from the top. More companies should follow in the footsteps of those that have already taken the initiative of including disability in their business, not only to offer employment opportunities to persons with disabilities but also to improve their business performance.

While good corporate practices and initiatives have been highlighted in this report, there is still a long way to go in terms of inclusion of persons with disabilities in the world of work in Africa. In addition to companies, other stakeholders including governments and civil society should play their part and join forces to foster social inclusion of persons with disabilities and provide them with equal opportunities to contribute to society and enter labour markets in Africa.

The ILO GBDN remains committed as a convenor and facilitator to connect different stakeholders and spark dialogue on how to make the world of work more accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities and advance the disability inclusion agenda in Africa and beyond.

Three key recommendations per actor:

Private sector companies

- Adopt and implement a company-wide disability inclusion policy, supported by senior management, including on issues of accessibility, reasonable accommodation, awareness raising
- Join existing African NBDNs and contribute to the development of new ones in Africa
- Partner with INGOs and OPDs to get support in their disability inclusion journey and build their disability confidence

National Business and Disability Networks

- Develop a business model to ensure the long-term sustainability of the network, in particular financial sustainability and the provision of added-value services to company members
- Develop advocacy capacities to engage with governments on disability inclusion at the national level and contribute to policy and legal developments for an accessible and inclusive labour market
- Initiate and maintain dialogue between NBDNs allowing for exchange of experiences and good practices, ultimately inspiring each other

Governments

- Adopt policies and legislation to improve the employment of persons with disabilities and encourage private sector companies to recruit persons with disabilities
- Lead by example in terms of employing persons with disabilities and promote their career progression
- Develop awareness-raising campaigns on disability to tackle stigma and misconceptions

Employer and Business Membership Organizations

- Contribute to the establishment of new NBDNs in the region and encourage EBMO members to join NBDNs
- Lead by example by taking action within their organization to recruit persons with disabilities and train staff on disability issues and encourage their members to do so
- Organize events related to disability inclusion to raise awareness and trigger interest and commitment on this topic among their members

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► Annex – Knowledge products and tools of African NBDNs and their respective members

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